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# Imitation and intangibility: postmodern perspectives on restoration and authenticity at the Hill House Box, Scotland

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## ABSTRACT

Restoration is often problematised within built heritage practice as an inauthentic activity of imitation. This is symptomatic of a Western focus on physical heritage sites, which is underpinned by an amalgam of scientific materialism and visual aesthetics. Situated within a postmodern conceptualisation of heritage as increasingly dynamic, social and intangible, this study suggests the relationship between restoration and authenticity is increasingly out of step with contemporary perspectives and would benefit from a critical gaze. Drawing on Baudrillard's theory of 'hyperreality', this study makes space for two key concepts within the built heritage paradigm: authenticity as emergent and fluid; and the legitimisation of imitation as a valid activity. Together, these are explored in relation to the restoration of the Hill House, Scotland, and its encapsulation within the 'Hill House Box'. From a postmodern, Baudrillardian outlook, the site becomes a dynamic performance between the restored building (a tangible 'simulation' of an idealised essence) and the users of the Hill House Box (an intangible, ritualised experience). Consequently, this demonstrates how the amalgamation of imitation and intangibility can overcome binary views of original/copy; authentic/inauthentic, resulting in the creation of emergent authenticity and aura that the Box both creates and is engulfed within.

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## Introduction

This article seeks to contribute towards understanding and destabilising the dominant 'materialist approach' towards historic building authenticity, which sits on one side of the materialist-constructivist dichotomy of authenticity proposed by Jones (2009). More specifically, it is the problematisation of building restoration as an inauthentic and fake activity within this framework that is of interest (see F. Scott 2008, 62; Jones and Yarrow 2013, 17; Walter 2014, 643; Stone 2019, 102). This perspective is very much symptomatic of a Western focus on physical sites as representative of heritage, and will be considered from the standpoint of two related disciplines – building conservation and architecture. This article will highlight how the union of these disciplines – what may be termed 'architectural conservation' – has stimulated and sustained the notion of 'objective authenticity' through a fusion of scientific materialism and visual aesthetics. This is a powerful amalgam that supports two prevailing outlooks: the conception of authenticity as original, measurable, and tangible (Jones 2009, 136; Rickly and Vidon 2018, 3; Gao and Jones 2020, 2); and the notion of restoration/imitation as pastiche or parody (Goulding 1998, 838; F. Scott 2008, 62).

Drawing on Jean Baudrillard's (1994) [1981] theory of 'hyperreality' and more specifically its usage within both built heritage research (Lewi 2008; Steiner 2010; Labadi 2010; Lovell 2018; Cocola-Gant 2019) and architecture (Proto 2006, 2020), this study attempts to make space for a postmodern heritage outlook within the built heritage paradigm that can accommodate the following two developments that are more sympathetic towards an 'intangible' outlook: the conception of authenticity as an emergent and fluid societal act; and the legitimisation of imitation/restoration as a valid activity. Together, these are explored in relation to the restoration of the Hill House, Scotland, an early twentieth century proto-modernist building designed in 1902 by notable architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh. To facilitate the restoration of the building to its original design concept, it has recently been encased within the 'Hill House Box' (hereafter 'the Box'). This temporary accessible architectural structure is serving the very practical function of sheltering and drying out the building whilst conservation works are undertaken on its decaying fabric. Equally, it fulfils a touristic and economic function by facilitating on-going visitor access, as well as offering a novelty of installation aesthetics to its immediate context.

From a postmodern, Baudrillardian outlook, the restored building is conceived as a tangible simulation (or 'simulacrum') of an idealised design essence (Cocola-Gant 2019); and the Box enclosure as a further abstracted simulacrum that facilitates a desirable intangible experience of the house – one that is both embodied and hyperreal (Wells 2007, 5; Rickly and Vidon 2018, 5). A dynamic performance between people and the restored building ensues, resulting in emergent and 'de-framed' authenticity and aura at the site (Cohen 2007, 78; Rickly-Boyd 2012, 271).

The article begins with an outline of the authorised characteristics of *authenticity* pertaining to the disciplines of building conservation and architecture. The concept of *restoration* is then explored from the perspective of this framework, where it is suggested that its deep-rooted classification as 'a lie from beginning to end' (Ruskin 2012, 205) [1849] is merely a symptom of prevailing (yet slowly waning) understandings of value and authenticity (for example, see Jones and Yarrow 2013, 6; Walter 2014, 635). Contrasting these perspectives, an understanding of heritage in relation to restoration, imitation and copying is then explored exclusively from the perspective of intangible heritage and related documents (namely UNESCO 2003; ICOMOS 1994). The relevance of Baudrillard's concepts of 'hyperreality' and 'simulacra' in relation to this are then offered, with restored historic buildings conceived as 'hyperreal simulacrum' that operate across a spectrum of imitation in relation to the closeness of original/copy; authentic/inauthentic (see Lewi 2008; Lovell 2018; Cocola-Gant 2019).

Lastly, the relationship between postmodern conceptions of restoration and authenticity inform a theoretically-driven exploration of the Hill House and its temporary enclosure, where a mixture of site visits and document analysis work towards the development of an exploratory case study method with a theory-building structure (Groat and Wang 2013, 349). In doing so, the perception of authenticity and restoration is brought within the context of a dynamic postmodern outlook, where plurality, multiplicity and continuity are championed (Tiesdell, Taner, and Heath 1996, 7; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000, 75); and differences between 'original' and 'copy' are distorted (Cohen 2007, 77; Steiner 2010, 245). This is an increasingly relevant viewpoint to explore when considering built heritage policy and practice are increasingly shifting towards a more postmodern outlook (see Djabarouti 2020), and architectural conservators/designers are beginning to favour similarity over contrast (see Plevvoets and Cleempoel 2019, 31).

## Authentic antiques

Authenticity is a central theme within theories of conservation (Rajagopalan 2012, 308), as well as both traditional and contemporary architecture (R. Brown and Maudlin 2012, 347). The key tenets of conservation have hardly changed over the past century (Buckley 2019, 62), with prevailing understandings of authenticity remaining highly influential (García-Almeida 2019, 411). Indeed, building conservation practice has long emphasised the documentary value and material



authenticity of buildings (Jones and Yarrow 2013, 6; Walter 2014, 636; Jokilehto 2018, 29), which makes it an easy poster child for the ‘... epistemological bias towards scientific materialism ...’ within the broader conservation sector (Winter 2013, 533). Intimately tied to the practice of building conservation is the practice of architecture, which in the second half of the twentieth century, enthusiastically embraced building conservation within its professional remit in response to a weakened societal confidence in Modernism (Diez 2012, 274). Despite the discipline of architecture emerging from ‘activities of life’, it has long been governed by aesthetic considerations (Pallasmaa 2011, 57, 2012a, 29), with a theoretical paper trail that demonstrates a focus on physical building qualities (K. Smith 2012, 107). Contemporary architectural practice consequently maintains a point of departure that primarily relies on the application of concepts to physical form – such as material stability and honesty (Hill 2006, 2,74; K. Smith 2012, 71); as well as permanence and continuity (L. Smith and Waterton 2009, 290; Jones 2017, 23).

Within this framework, the relationship between restoration and authenticity in conservation is traditionally related back to the notion of *patina*, or how much one could (or should) have visual access to alteration and ageing (D. A. Scott 2016, 11; Gao and Jones 2020, 9). Similarly, from an architectural perspective, material repair choice is often informed by the need for it to weather (Hassard 2009a, 282). It is this Ruskinian<sup>1</sup> obsession with patina and its emphasis on material authenticity which has resulted in the very modern fetishisation of heritage buildings as visual representations of the contrast between continuity and renewal (see Hosagrahar 2012, 77). An example of this is the conservation work undertaken at Rochester Cathedral, which vehemently exemplifies the Ruskinian/SPAB<sup>2</sup> aesthetic (see Figure 1).

At its simplest, what this aesthetic of distinctions represents is the passage of time. This is desirable within a Western context because old things are perceived as having more inherent value and scientific validity (L. Smith 2006, 285; Yarrow 2018, 1). As a result, the older a building is and



Figure 1. The SPAB approach towards authenticity at Rochester Cathedral, UK. Author original image.

the more it distinguishes between old and new, the more ‘authentic’ it is perceived to be (Labadi 2010, 70).

## **Authenticity in the postmodern heritage paradigm**

### ***Restoration, copying, imitation***

Restoration is understood as returning a building to a previous state (Muñoz Viñas 2005, 17; Orbaşlı 2008, 50). In contrast to the aforementioned Ruskinian principles, it does not encourage historical legibility (Stone 2019, 102), hence why it has long been considered an approach that damages historic building authenticity<sup>3</sup> (Glendinning 2013, 117). For historic buildings, most commonly the previous state that is selected is the one that is perceived to best represent the original architectural conception of the building, meaning restoration is often associated with a desire for architectural perfection (Earl 2003, 57; Feilden 2003, 9; Kamel-Ahmed 2015, 67). Glendinning (2013, 78) describes restoration as ‘... a hypothetical original artistic integrity, an ideal essence, which must be deduced and recovered from the present state’. However, it is not necessarily limited to the building in its totality (or its ‘unity’), with smaller works of building maintenance and making good often requiring at least a partial return to a previous condition (e.g. a small stone indent)<sup>4</sup> (F. Scott 2008, 63) (see Figure 2).

Restoration can be achieved in two principal ways: a ‘subtracting from’ sense and an ‘adding to’ sense (Hassard 2009b, 149–50). For the former – the ‘subtracting from’ – any changes to a building across time, whether natural or manmade, are removed or reversed (Jones and Yarrow 2013, 15). This is most notably exemplified by the nineteenth century habit of ‘scraping’<sup>5</sup> historic buildings to remove signs of ageing and return them to a stylistic unity (Forsyth 2008, 3; Hassard 2009a, 274). For the latter – the ‘adding to’ – which is particularly relevant in the case of decaying buildings, this



**Figure 2.** Isolated sandstone repair at Murrays Mills, Manchester. A restoration approach? Image courtesy of Jonathan Davis. All rights reserved.





**Figure 3.** The large-scale reconstruction of the Frauenkirche in Dresden. Image courtesy of Sally Stone. All rights reserved.

naturally must involve the practice of copying (or imitation) – ranging from the copying of minor details, through to more extreme cases of imitation like at the city of Warsaw, Poland,<sup>6</sup> or the Frauenkirche in Dresden (see [Figure 3](#)).

Copying and reproducing things has long been an integral aspect of human learning and development (Benjamin 1969, 2; Lowenthal 2015, 156; Jokilehto 2018, 424). For objects in museum settings, the production of replicas through copying can have both a utilitarian and aesthetic function (Barassi 2007, 2). Yet for historic buildings, copying can further lend itself as a tactic for intervention strategies (Plevoets and Cleempoel 2019, 31), as well as a means to learn relevant craft skills through ‘imitation of procedure’ (Sennett 2008, 58). Even Ruskin acknowledged that imitation has its merits in relation to documentary evidence (see Vaccaro 1996, 310).<sup>7</sup>

### ***Applying an intangible outlook***

Imitation can also assist in transmitting the cultural values of ‘tradition-based creations’ to future generations (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 2004, 54). This could be in relation to the re-enactment of skills through the physical act of copying (Hassard 2009b, 156); sustaining values and standards that reflect a particular social identity (Lenzerini 2011, 105); or supporting the reproduction of specific social practices (see Askew 2010, 36).<sup>8</sup> Expounding this view, Hassard (2009b, 151) suggests the

restoration of buildings should be redefined as a ‘dynamic cultural practice’, which means alterations to the building fabric are undertaken to support an experience or expression of the past in the present through contemporary practices. Similarly, Jones and Yarrow (2013, 24) describe the authenticity of historic buildings as ‘... a distributed property that emerges through the interaction between people and things’. What these fresh perspectives on authenticity have in common is how they challenge the notion of the historic building as the source of value – instead redefining it as a present-day cultural construct (Jones and Yarrow 2013, 6). Put simply, the value of physical heritage and its perceived authenticity is a creation of contemporary society (Glendinning 2013, 424).

This is best understood through the lens of the UNESCO ‘Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage’ (hereafter the 2003 Convention), which defines heritage as being ‘... constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment ... and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity ...’ (UNESCO 2003, 2). When understanding heritage exclusively from the perspective of the 2003 Convention, heritage as a practice shifts focus from buildings to processes by acknowledging it as a product of various economic, political and societal factors (Harvey 2001, 320; Skounti 2009, 75). It is perhaps unsurprising then that Glendinning (2013, 424) describes intangible heritage as ‘radical’, as at its core it disrupts the idea that authenticity only relates to originality. This builds on the Nara Document’s (1994) earlier assertion that themes of authenticity and truth are dependent upon both the specific case and culture within which they are situated (Barassi 2007, 4; Fairchild Ruggles and Silverman 2009, 5; Lenzerini 2011, 113; García-Esparza 2019, 132). As Fairchild Ruggles and Silverman (2009, 6) explain:

The Nara Document also permitted authenticity to be judged not simply in terms of an original, from which later states were understood to be mere copies (and thus inauthentic), but measured instead by the meaning attributed to an object or monument.

Despite critique of the Nara Document being underpinned by traditional criteria in relation to authenticity (see Jones 2010, 186), it nonetheless enforces a postmodern idea that ‘... the meaning and value of an object, even if it is “inauthentic”, a copy or a replica, will depend on public perception’ (Jokilehto 2009, 133). For example, Michael Petzet (quoted in Falser 2008, 129) posits a reconstruction of a monument can become authentic simply by transmitting an ‘authentic message’. The trajectory of this idea is that a copy *could* be just as authentic – or perhaps even *more* authentic – than the original from which it was copied. This is especially potent within a postmodern heritage paradigm, where distinctions between original/copy; representation/reality; can legitimately break down (Cohen 2007, 77; Steiner 2010, 245); and copies are free to accumulate their own value across time (Barassi 2007, 3).

It is an attractive task to consider this more dynamic conception of heritage, restoration and authenticity in relation to the traditional restoration ideology of the instrumental nineteenth century architect Eugène Viollet-le-Duc (hereafter Viollet-le-Duc), who was a key individual in relation to the methodological development of historic building restoration and reconstruction (Cocola-Gant 2019). Viollet-le-Duc described the key principles of building restoration as: retention of valued features; increasing the lifespan of the building; strengthening the building by use of contemporary materials or processes; and keeping the building in active use (Viollet-le-Duc 1996, 316–17). Whilst at the other end of the binary nineteenth century debate, the act of preservation disconnected buildings from contemporary societal needs (F. Scott 2008, 54; Kamel-Ahmed 2015, 69), what is clear from Viollet-le-Duc’s description of restoration is the desire to *engage* with contemporary life through the restoration process – both in terms of utilising modern technologies/materials (Hassard 2009a, 282), as well as seeking to ensure the building is practically useful for contemporary society<sup>9</sup> (Plevoets and Cleempoel 2019, 10). Perhaps more critical within this philosophy is the idea that a restoration project does *not* necessarily seek a historically accurate original state. Instead, it seeks an idealised ‘essence’ or ‘atmosphere’ of authenticity for the benefit of present-day societies (Lewi 2008, 150; Glendinning 2013, 91). By focussing on an authentic essence,

restoration therefore bypasses the binary views of traditional/modern; real/fake; authentic/inauthentic, as it becomes inconsequential as to whether the final restored state is historically accurate or not (see Viollet-le-Duc 1996, 314).<sup>10</sup>

## Hyperreality and the authentic copy

Baudrillard's (1994) [1981] theory of hyperreality is highly applicable in relation to restoration. Though there is no definitive agreement on its exact meaning, this study takes it to refer to a lack of distinction between what is original and what is copy, which results in an indistinguishable hotchpotch of real and fake phenomena<sup>11</sup> (see Goulding 1998, 848; Labadi 2010, 79; Steiner 2010, 245; Proto 2020, 69). Connected to this is the concept of simulacra, which refers to three levels of copying (or three versions of imitation), which become increasingly hyperreal (Rickly-Boyd 2012, 273; Lovell 2018, 181). These are: first-order simulacrum (imitation), second-order simulacrum (reproduction) and third-order simulacrum (hyperreal) (Steiner 2010, 245; Lovell 2018, 184). There is a body of work that explores hyperreality and simulacra in relation to the restoration of architectural heritage (Lewi 2008; Labadi 2010; Steiner 2010; Lovell 2018; Cocola-Gant 2019); and within this, further links have been made specifically between the theory of hyperreality and Viollet-le-Duc's 'total restoration' philosophy (see Lewi 2008; Cocola-Gant 2019). For Example, Lewi (2008, 158) suggests the closeness of original and copy that is achieved via the practice of restoration defines restored buildings as 'hyperreal simulacrum':

Jean Baudrillard defines hyper-reality as this very condition in which the real has been engulfed [by] its very simulation; the two become one and the same, as simulation threatens the detection of the differences between "the true and the false," "the real and the imaginary," "the authentic and the inauthentic". Can it be concluded that this state of contemporary hyper-reality as exemplified in major heritage sites is the direct legacy of Viollet-le-Duc's conservation ideals? No not directly however the simulacrum becomes all the more palpable when the real and its copy ultimately come too close to each other.

In relation to the adaptation of architectural heritage, Plevoets and Cleempoel (2019, 32) similarly refer to three strategies of intervention called *translatio*, *imitatio*, and *aemulatio*<sup>12</sup> (after Pigman (1980) and Lowenthal (2015, 157) [1985]). Though they make no direct link to Baudrillard, there is a resemblance between the tripartite classifications in terms of a spectrum that demonstrates an increasing blurring of boundaries between original and copy (see Table 1).

Moving across the three levels from first- to third-order, legibility weakens and the boundary between fact and fantasy becomes increasingly vague. In one sense, the 'third-order/aemulatio' is *too* authentic – a version of the past that becomes superior to reality through the re-creation of an idealised essence<sup>13</sup> (Cohen 2007, 78; Falser 2008, 130). In another sense, the copy becomes more real than the original, as it not only supersedes it but offers a new 'reality' rooted in the boundless realms of idealisation and fantasy (Lovell 2018, 183; Cocola-Gant 2019, 124) – hence why scholars state this degree of imitation 'precedes reality' (Steiner 2010, 245; Lovell 2018, 184; Proto 2020, 88); and hence the paradoxical terms 'genuine fake' and 'authentic reproduction' (see Cohen 2007, 77).

**Table 1.** Comparison between Baudrillard's three orders of simulacra (or hyper-realities) and Plevoets and Cleempoel (2019) tripartite classification of historic building intervention strategies.

Type	Description
First-order (imitation)	A direct copy that is distinguishable as a copy
<i>Translatio</i>	Imitation with licence (creativity)
Second-order (reproduction)	Identical reproduction that is hard to distinguish
<i>Imitatio</i>	Subtle and selective copying, with harmony between original and copy
Third-order (hyperreality)	Radical imitation of reality that blurs original (authentic) and copy (inauthentic)
<i>Aemulatio</i>	Improving the original, hard to distinguish between old and new

Thus, despite these hyperreal copies having no actual origin or archetype (see Baudrillard 1994, 1), they nonetheless have the ability to manufacture a greater public fascination of built heritage sites by decreasing reliance on factual representation and offering a more intense emotional experience of essence and aura (Wells 2007, 5; Jokilehto 2009, 133; Rickly-Boyd 2012, 273; Harrison 2013, 88; Pearce and Mohammadi 2018, 72; Rickly and Vidon 2018, 5).

## The Hill House

### *Restoration project overview*

The Hill House is located near the coast of Helensburgh, Scotland, and is now owned by the National Trust for Scotland. It was originally designed by Charles Rennie Mackintosh and built between 1902–04, in what is now considered to be a ‘proto-modern’ style. At the turn of the century, Mackintosh was experimenting at the frontiers of architectural design, with the Hill House noted as an important project that helped define the forthcoming Modernist style (Wright 2012, 86). Two aspects of the design were critical in this respect: the use of (then) contemporary materials (namely Portland cement render); and the novel architectural design methods employed (most notably the removal of hoods, cills and copings from the façade designs). However, these ideas were executed prior to the construction industry acquiring an accurate understanding of their impact on the ongoing condition of buildings. Consequently, these bold and innovative design decisions led to consistent water ingress over many years that has resulted in exponential decay of the original building fabric (Douglas-Jones et al. 2016). After many years and failed attempts to repair the building, a temporary encasement was installed in 2019, which completely encloses and protects the building within a stainless-steel chain-mail mesh structure (see Figure 4).



**Figure 4.** The Hill House encapsulated by the ‘Hill House Box’. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48672523318/in/album-72157710676927421/>.



## **Authentic aesthetic**

The significance of the building as an important proto-modern design resulted in a complexity over its authenticity in relation to traditional tenets underpinned by the Venice Charter (ICOMOS 1964). More specifically, the safeguarding of the building as ‘historical evidence’ and the need to respect ‘original material’ and ‘contributions of all periods’ were contested during its significance assessment. This issue is clearly outlined in the heritage statement:

... the notion of preserving the designer’s intentions is heavily compromised by the notion that the work of all ages is worthy of being preserved, as “unity of style is not the aim of restoration” (Article 11). For a building which is an icon of the International Style, “unity of style” might, with every justification, be considered as the primary value to be preserved.

(Wright 2012, 94)

The position on authenticity within the heritage statement is clear – it recommends a unity of style based on a hypothetical point of completion, rather than acknowledging the broader historical development of the building as represented by accretions, patina and/or weathering. Indeed, this position can also find support from Historic England (2008, 45), which does state that ‘[r]etaining the authenticity of a place is not always achieved by retaining as much of the existing fabric as is technically possible’. In considering the significance of the building as its unity of style, a conservation approach has subsequently been employed that focuses on the restoration of a concept – the design concept. Thus, what is restored is in fact an idealised or hypothetical essence – or what Baudrillard calls, a ‘simulation’:

The real does not efface itself in favour of the imaginary; it effaces itself in favour of the more real than real: the hyperreal. The truer than true: this is simulation.

(Baudrillard 1990, 11)

By determining that the building’s authenticity resides within a design concept (or style), the resulting restoration cannot be anything but a ‘genuine fake’, because the restoration methodology by definition requires a meticulous and creative approach towards imitation that results in the building becoming an improved version of itself (Cocola-Gant 2019, 134; Proto 2020, 86). Thus, the result will achieve both an impression of authenticity whilst still remaining an obvious counterfeit (Cohen 2007, 78). Consequently, what is actually created is a ‘... simulated experience that fulfils the desire for the “real” ...’ (Rickly and Vidon 2018, 5; Proto 2020, 75) – an approach that becomes increasingly complex when factoring in the encapsulation of the house within the Box.

## **The Hill House Box**

The encapsulation of built heritage is an intriguing topic, with many reasons as to why such a project may be undertaken. Examples range from the very pragmatic intentions of making a building watertight (e.g. the temporary tented scaffold constructed over Castle Drogo, Devon); to the creation of artwork (e.g. the temporary wrapping of the Reichstag, Germany); or to offer a new programmatic function (e.g. the permanent glass housing over the Old Hamar Cathedral, Norway).<sup>14</sup> For the Hill House, the purpose of its temporary encapsulation is to facilitate the restoration of the building by: protecting it from the harsh Helensburgh climate; slowing down the process of decay; and allowing the building to dry out (see Carmody Groarke 2019). However, far from these pragmatic intentions, the installation of the Box and the subsequent site experience that it affords is quite radical and unique. Whilst it may be a temporary structure, it is also a habitable one – with the transitory qualities associated with construction scaffolding or temporary coverings combined with the programmatic and utilitarian virtues of more permanent coverings. This amalgamation of qualities results in a unique visitor experience with the Hill House and its ongoing restoration project.



**Figure 5.** Photographing the Hill House roof from the external walkway. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0).Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48672452183/in/album-72157710676927421/>.

The Box offers various external walkways, staircases and viewing platforms that gives visitors a novel autonomy in how they wish to engage with the Hill House (see Figure 5). Visitors can look down on the various roofs of the building (see Figure 6); walk alongside upper storey windows (see Figure 7); touch the building at heights previously unimaginable; experience an alternative view of the surrounding Clyde Estuary (see Figure 8); as well as gain insight into the evolution of the ongoing conservation project (National Trust for Scotland 2019). Viewed from surrounding vistas, it also creates a bold, multi-layered view of the building set within the landscape (Figure 9).

Accordingly, whilst the installation of the Box was initially a subordinate add-on to the Hill House itself – and conceived very much in the spirit of a museological outlook (i.e. building as ‘artefact’) (Carmody Groarke 2019) – its architectural presence actually contributes towards the authenticity of the house by supporting new visitor experiences and autonomy (Pallasmaa 2011, 23). The Box acts as a mediator between the original house and the formation of new traditions at the site, which are realised through the creation of new contemporary ‘life patterns’ (Kamel-Ahmed 2015, 69). So whilst the Hill House itself is being restored as a representation of the past, it is equally brought into the present through the spatial and experiential social practices





**Figure 6.** A visitor photographs the roof of the Hill House from the external walkway. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48672884107/in/album-72157710676927421/>.

that the Box supports (Abdelmonem and Selim 2012, 163). The novel use of the Box accordingly becomes part of the ‘everyday’ experience of the site, by supporting the formation of a new social memory of the house (Harrison and Rose 2010, 240). This is very much in the aforementioned ‘adding to’ sense; but of the intangible, rather than the tangible. Not only does this align with the postmodern conception of intangible heritage as an experiential and ritualistic practice (Littler 2014, 95), but also supports a further two ideas. Firstly, that historic buildings can be altered in such a way that maintains a dynamic continuity of traditions, practices and rituals (Abdelmonem and Selim 2012; Kamel-Ahmed 2015); and secondly, that a connection to (and reverence for) the past can be represented by the creation of something new in the present<sup>15</sup> (for example, see Pallasmaa 2012b, 15; Jencks 2016; Frost 2017, 263; Plevoets and Cleempoel 2019, 99).

The resulting heritage practices at the site facilitate novel and intimate contact with the ongoing restored essence and atmosphere of the building’s original design concept. In turn, this enables an experience of aura, in that users are engaging in a unique, embodied and affective experience which subsequently *becomes* authentic (Rickly-Boyd 2012, 271; Lovell 2018, 182). The Box, as a new entity,



**Figure 7.** A visitor walks alongside upper storey windows. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48672757131/in/album-72157710676927421/>.

can thus be regarded as an abstracted simulacrum, in that the experience of the Box and the original house become entangled and indistinguishable, as do what is past and what is present.

### Hyperreality at the Hill House

The restoration project at the Hill House is misinterpreted if conceived purely within the nineteenth century preservation-restoration dichotomy. It is also misrepresented if considered a mere copy, imitation or ‘pseudo experience’ of authenticity that society seeks out (see Goulding 1998, 837; Chhabra 2012, 499; Rickly-Boyd 2012, 272). Instead, it is best understood as a complex relationship between the idealised essence of the past – as represented by the tangible heritage (the building); and the contemporary practices of the present – as represented by the intangible heritage (the personal and social practices facilitated by the Box). Consequently, the combination of building and Box creates a dynamic performance between people and the restored building which results in *new* authenticity and aura (Rickly-Boyd 2012, 271). The authenticity of the Hill House therefore becomes defined not only by an essence of an authentic aesthetic; but by the Box structure as a catalyst for ‘negotiations’ between this restored ‘reality’ and society (see Jones 2009, 136). This





**Figure 8.** Augmented views of the surrounding Helensburgh landscape. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48672818031/in/album-72157710676927421/>.

effect is described by Cohen (2007) as ‘emergent authenticity’ or ‘de-framing’, in which the Box has now become engulfed by the perceived authenticity of the building. This is a process that will likely intensify over time (Rickly-Boyd 2012, 273), which is an important factor to consider, as the Box is anticipated to encapsulate the house for up to fifteen years (Carmody Groarke 2019) – a forecast which only raises more questions in relation to the ongoing development of authenticity at the site.





**Figure 9.** A view from the surrounding site. Photo: Tom Parnell (CC BY-SA 2.0). Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/itmpa/48673045312/in/album-72157710676927421/>.

### **Reflections and future projections: restoring the past, ritualising the present**

This study has attempted to destabilise common ‘truths’ in relation to historic building restoration and authenticity, by applying a postmodern Baudrillardian outlook to the Hill House and the Box which encapsulates it. It has demonstrated how this perspective can overcome the dominant scientific and visual disciplinary understandings of restoration and authenticity, which are often tolerated and propagated within the built heritage paradigm. What has become apparent within this study is how it is actually the amalgamation of imitation and intangibility – of restoring the past and ritualising the present – that can overcome binary views of original/copy; authentic/inauthentic, and results in the creation of emergent authenticity and aura that the Box has both created and been engulfed within.

As this is a relatively new restoration project and the Box a relatively new installation, the full impact of its presence on the authenticity of the site is yet to be fully realised. However, based on the likely intensification of its emergent authenticity at the site over the next decade or so, its temporary nature already provokes questions concerning its legacy and impact on the perceived authenticity of the Hill House, when such a time comes that it should be removed. For instance, when it is time to remove the Box, what happens to the new life patterns, everyday experiences, social memory and emergent authenticity that it created and sustained? Is it conceivable that these new ways of perceiving, experiencing and valuing the Hill House may support an argument for the retention of the Box? Or will a prevailing desire to remove the Box motivate a post-rationalisation of these qualities as inconsequential economic by-products of decay prevention? Perhaps the Box may have even accumulated enough authenticity (the fifteen year reflective glow of the Hill House) to be celebrated on its own merit and to justify its permanent relocation elsewhere – a heritage by-product of the original building? Whilst it is exciting to speculate over its ultimate fate, one thing remains certain – the contemporary yearning to engage with the aura of the original Mackintosh design has inspired a radical conservation method at the site, alongside a timely broadening of perspectives relating to the restoration and authenticity of historic buildings.

## Notes

1. John Ruskin, critic (1819–1900).
2. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). A society underpinned by the writings of John Ruskin.
3. For example, Ruskin stated restoration was ‘... the most total destruction which a building can suffer ... a destruction accompanied with false description of the thing destroyed ...’ (Ruskin 2012) [1849].
4. Scott (2008, 63) makes the further proposition that much of what is classified as ‘conservation’ is actually ‘continuous restoration’.
5. Hence the nineteenth century ‘Anti-Scrape Movement’.
6. This example could also be classified as ‘reconstruction’, which is often used interchangeably with restoration (Orbaşlı 2008, 50; Stanley-Price 2009, 33).
7. Ruskin specifically acknowledged the reconstruction of St. Paul’s Basilica Outside the Walls as a respectable example (Jokilehto 2009, 130).
8. Some well-known non-Western examples of cultural value transmission through imitation include the restoration of mosques in Timbuktu (Djingareyber, Sankoré and Sidi Yahia Mosques), and the reconstruction of temples in Japan (Ise Jingū).
9. This was subsequently reflected in the Athens Charter (ICOMOS 1931) and its preceding 1904 Madrid Conference, both of which advocated for the functional use of historic buildings in contemporary life (Fairchild Ruggles and Silverman 2009, 1).
10. A famous example of this is Viollet-le-Duc’s controversial restoration of Notre Dame’s Western façade, which received heavy criticism at the time for introducing imagined features (see Reiff 1971, 17).
11. An early example of this concept in practice are the landscape ‘follies’ of the eighteenth century, which were built to entertain and move the viewer by pretending to be something authentic from the past (Darlington 2020, 94; Sadler 1999, 75).
12. Looking further afield, a similar tripartite classification of ‘emulation, competition and homage’ has also been applied to music studies (H. M. Brown 1982).
13. Boughey (2013) refers to this as the evocation of a ‘golden age’.
14. Other examples of encapsulation include Rosslyn Chapel, Scotland; Les Fresnoy Art Center, France; and the Suenos Stone, Scotland (the latter being a monument, rather than a building).
15. Hence the 2003 Convention’s notion of heritage being ‘constantly recreated’ (UNESCO 2003, 2).

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